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"THE BUG CREW" VS. NOXIOUS WEEDS

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2003

United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Intermountain Region
Ogden, Utah

THE "2002 BUG CREW" OF CAMAS VALLEY, IDAHO

The Camas Knapweed Biological Control Project, known as the "Bug Crew" began in 1998 as a way to incorporate weed biological control with an educational opportunity for students in Camas County. Five to seven students from the seventh to the twelfth grades are recruited annually to participate in the program. These young students participate by releasing insect biological control agents, monitoring the insects to determine that they had become established and monitoring vegetation to assess the impact of the insects on the target weeds.

The project objectives are:

- Implement a biological control program for knapweed in Camas County.
- Determine if available biocontrol insects can be established, and survive the extreme weather conditions found on the Camas Prairie, and effectively reduce the amount of knapweed in and around the project area.
- Provide opportunity for local students to participate in weed management and gain life skills, such as project planning, organizing, decision-making, problem solving, data collection and analysis, public speaking and communication.
- Provide summer employment that is interesting, useful, and provides a stepping stone toward careers in the field of biology.

1st STAGE:

Students began in 1998 by identifying nine sites in a variety of geographic locations with heavy knapweed infestations. All land used in the project was contributed by private landowners. The students built fences around the 150' x 150' sites to exclude grazing by livestock. They then collected pre-release data for both knapweed and native vegetation. All sites were then GPS'd or traversed by using Global Positioning System equipment.

2nd STAGE:

The "Bug Crew" erected insectory tents that provide protection from predators for the biocontrol insects. Once the insectories were set up, three different biocontrol insects were released inside the tents. These insects were provided to the project by the Rocky Mountain Research Station. The insects were then monitored to determine if their populations increased in numbers to be collected and released in other knapweed-infested areas.

The "Bug Crew" also provided valuable assistance for other biocontrol projects such as the Shake Creek leafy spurge project.

An insectory tent was erected at each of the nine sites to protect biocontrol insects from predation and to confine them to the release sites.

Several groups of students have participated in the program to date. Some have participated for several years.

They have also expressed satisfaction of the program as it has provided them with an opportunity to learn about entomology, weed identification, and "research processes".

Students have learned about the biology of plants and insects. Many have expressed gratitude to have been provided an opportunity to participate in a project that is worthwhile, interesting, and provides a service to their community.

All of the students have worked very hard to make this project a success and to be good examples for the students that follow them in years to come.

The "Bug Crew" has conducted informative field trips for/and provided information to representatives of Idaho, U.S. Senator Larry Craig and Congressman Mike Simpson. They have been visited by members of the Washington Office of Forest Health Protection. They have also been recognized and featured in a variety of different newspapers throughout the area.

"I never dreamed I would be helping with a project this big. It has really been a lot of fun and I've learned so much about the different kinds of insects and plants".

"It is interesting to learn about how the *Lorinus minutus* attacks the seed head and then another insect, *Sphenoptera jugoslavica*, attacks the roots".

Project cooperators include:

Project administrated by the Wood River Resource Conservation and Development Agency.

Key participants include:

- The Camas Creek Cooperative Weed Management Area
- Camas County Schools
- USDA Forest Service
- Camas Soil Conservation District
- Gooding Soil Conservation District
- R. A. Progar, USDA Forest Service
- G. Markin, USDA Forest Service
- N. Reedy, Bug Crew Supervisor
- J. Shelly, USDA Forest Service

Other folks came from Washington, D.C.

Members of Forest Health Protection from the Washington Office learn about the biocontrol programs.

How can I help?

- Please report known locations of noxious weeds to the local Forest Service office.
- Contact your local Forest Service or State Department of Agriculture to receive information about local noxious weeds and what you can do to assist in the eradication and control of these pests.
- Start a noxious weed "Bug Crew" program in your area to benefit your community and local students.

For further information contact:
USDA Forest Service
Forest Health Protection
1249 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709

Cover photo: Knapweed

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